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# Alabama waits for stimulus portion

## State's share to be detailed on Web site published next week

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State officials are busy sorting through the federal economic stimulus plan to determine how to dole out the possible \$3 billion coming to Alabama, but, for now, nothing is certain.

"We're just reviewing everything and getting our arms around it at this point," said Drayton Nabers, who was tapped by Gov. Bob Riley to oversee the handling of federal stimulus money.

Nabers, a former Cabinet member under Riley and a former state chief justice, is now an attorney with the Birmingham law firm Maynard Cooper and Gale, which will devote some staff to assist in the effort.

Nabers said he will probably publish a Web site Monday, but no later than Tuesday, that will give details on the stimulus package and the disbursement of funds for Alabamians.

"It will have a good review of the bill and the possibilities within the stimulus package people can access throughout the state to determine what's available and how they go about applying for funds," he said.

The Web site will be linked from the governor's and state's Web sites, said Riley spokesman Todd Stacy.

Passed by Congress last week and signed into law by President Barack Obama on Tuesday, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 is the largest federal spending bill ever passed, going from introduction to law in less than a month. Clocking in at more than 1,100 pages, there is a lot of legislative language to decipher.

"We don't know everything yet, but that's why Gov. Riley and his budget experts are combing through the details of this massive new law right now," Stacy said.

The Legislative Fiscal Office estimates Alabama will get at least \$3 billion, with

state agencies and institutions eligible to get more money from specific federal agencies.

For instance, one provision of the stimulus package sends the Department of Energy \$4.5 billion to modernize the nation's electric grid to enhance delivery and reliability, but Alabama's share of that money and which agency or institution would receive it is still unknown, according to fiscal office research.

States are waiting on federal agencies to clarify and define how and to whom the money will be doled out, said Gregory Fitch, executive director of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education.

"There are a variety of things going on, and once they set the definitions we'll have a better idea of what's going on," Fitch said.

Alabama should get \$730 million in "fiscal stabilization" money for education and state agencies. Of that, \$597 million is designated for education.

That money is intended to restore budgets cuts, but isn't enough to return state appropriations to their 2008 level, as the act intends, said Bill Jones, lobbyist for the University of Alabama System.

Jones said it's too early to know how much will come to UA from the state or what the system is eligible for from the federal government.

"To say a finite 'here, here and here,' we don't know yet because the agencies managing the money have not yet decided," Jones said.

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